

## Editors' Note

These are interesting times for emerging historians in Canada. Today's students are part of what is perhaps the first generation in North America since 1492 that does not expect to achieve the same level of prosperity as its predecessors. How will this generation respond to new realities? How will the new reality influence the way the next generation writes history? As a forum for student scholarship *Past Imperfect* may offer hints. The articles in this issue of *Past Imperfect* are diverse in their topics, approaches, and perspectives. They range from the orthodox to the self-consciously iconoclastic.

Steven Hewitt explores the little-known On to Ottawa Trek that *did* make it to Ottawa. That trek may have been written off by earlier historians as a pathetic failure, but Hewitt finds it significant because it sheds light on the divisions within the political left in Canada, particularly in Ontario, in the 1930s. Hewitt's article here is a companion piece to his "We Are Sitting at the Edge of a Volcano": Winnipeg during the On-to-Ottawa Trek" in *Prairie Forum* (1994).

William Mills looks at the significance of the "Roman Question" in the context of Italian foreign relations. He argues that Italy's capture of Rome in 1870 represented a kind of declaration of independence from the foreign powers that had supported or acceded to Italian unification in the preceding years. Ironically, Mills argues, Italy's very capture of Rome undermined its national unity and its position *vis-à-vis* its neighbours.

Yifeng Zhao's use of historical fiction to study concubinage in seventeenth-century China should help convince others that fiction remains an underutilized historical source. Zhao argues that Chinese fiction shows that social reality in seventeenth-century China was very different from how it is portrayed in government records, and in existing historical works. Others who aim to extract historical evidence from historical fiction will be interested in Zhao's discussion of methodology. His article is part of a larger study that will soon be available in his dissertation.

Mark Levene provides scholars with the first detailed examination of the *Canadian Journal*, the first scientific

periodical in Canada. Levene explains how that journal, during its first decade, reflected and influenced the development of a capitalist economy and a modern state in a small, isolated British colony.

Although Perestroika brought significant change to Soviet society, change for that society did not come without cost. Sean Atkins explores how some of the Soviet Union's most vulnerable citizens, long overlooked, began to assert themselves after 1988. He concludes, however, that although the Soviet state and society attempted reforms, they were unable to improve significantly the conditions under which persons with a physical disability lived.

*Past Imperfect* has published several articles touching on the history of Canada's Native peoples. This year Anatol Scott's article scrutinizes the life of well-known fur trader, Alexander Henry, the Elder. Scott argues that much of the accepted wisdom regarding Henry may be nothing more than a deliberately fabricated myth. Not everyone will agree with Scott, but if his work incites further research and debate, it will be a historiographical success.

Our final article focuses on one of Canada's best known urban renewal projects. Richard Bobier explains how the Africville relocation was transformed in the minds of observers from a symbol of Halifax's commitment to humanitarianism and equality at its inception, to a symbol of racial injustice by the time it was complete. Bobier argues that changing conceptions of the importance of community and culture, particularly among sociologists, help explain the transformation.

Because of the sudden growth in the number of papers submitted to *Past Imperfect* in the past year, these articles represent only a few of the papers these editors have had the privilege of reading this year. The editors wish to thank the many authors and referees who have worked with us. Our interaction with you has been the most gratifying aspect of our jobs. We also thank the many other people who have contributed to this work. We cannot name them all, but for their financial support and their advice the members of the University of Alberta's Department of History and Classics, faculty, staff, and students, deserve special recognition. Without their support the journal simply could not survive.